

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

August 19, 2020

Michael Carvajal  
Director  
Bureau of Prisons  
320 1st St NW  
Washington, DC 20534

Christopher Rivers  
Warden  
United States Penitentiary Thomson  
1100 One Mile Road  
Thomson, IL 61285

Dear Director Carvajal and Warden Rivers:

We write to request that the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) immediately provide on-site COVID-19 testing for all staff at United States Penitentiary (USP) Thomson. In addition, we request that BOP provide USP Thomson with additional temporary duty (TDY) personnel to help staff the facility.

As of August 17, 2020, at least 20 staff and 2 inmates reportedly have tested positive for COVID-19 at USP Thomson. While we appreciate the work of USP Thomson to test staff known to have been exposed to COVID-19 and all inmates, more staff testing is urgently needed to find asymptomatic cases and prevent the spread of this virus.

This concern is acknowledged by an August 17, 2020, communication to prison staff from USP Thomson leadership. The communication notes, “we are critical infrastructure workers, and (given the numbers) we have all likely had exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.”

In addition to the public health importance of identifying all cases, the rural location of Thomson prison requires further attention from BOP. USP Thomson is located in Carroll County, Illinois, which has a population of 14,000 people and no hospitals. As such, impacted staff and inmates must go to a neighboring county or to the state of Iowa to receive emergency care.

Further, USP Thomson staff live in many counties surrounding the prison in Illinois and Iowa. Untested asymptomatic staff commuting to and from work could negatively impact communities surrounding the prison if further testing is not undertaken. Given these concerns, local stakeholders must have a full understanding of the cases of COVID-19 at USP Thomson to help respond to this situation.

Finally, we again request that BOP immediately increase the number of TDY personnel at USP Thomson to maintain safe staffing levels. As you know, Thomson prison has just over 400 staff, but is authorized to employ more than 600 employees. With the temporary loss of 20 staff and

potentially more at an already understaffed facility, additional TDY staff will likely be necessary to maintain operations and safety in the facility.

Thank you for your attention to this important and time-sensitive matter. We look forward to working with you to protect the staff and inmates of USP Thomson, as well as surrounding communities, from a potentially severe and significant outbreak of COVID-19. Given the urgent public-health matter in question, we look forward to your prompt response no later than August 26, 2020.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cheri Bustos

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Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

/s/ Dick Durbin

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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

/s/ Dave Loebsack

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Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator